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Title: Need to appoint gate keepers at railway crossings and to ensure proper security.

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): Madam Speaker, I wish to invite the attention of the House to the heart-breaking train accident occurred yesterday at Mararikkulam in my Constituency, Allappuzha district under Thiruvananthapuram railway division. Four persons, including two German nationals, were killed in this accident when their car hit the Chennai-Alappuzha Express. The accident occurred at Poopallikavu at around 10.30 in the morning. The Chennai-Alapuzha Express going towards Alapuzha rammed into the car and the travelers in the car died immediately.

It is clear that the accident occurred due to the lack of a guard in the level crossing. Also there were no sufficient security measures in that level crossing, which is the case in most of the level crossings in the country. Various reports show that 17,000 level crossings still stand as unmanned in our country, which is more than 50 percent of the number of accidents have occurred so far in various level crossings. Statistics show that about 75 percent of railway accidents are occurring at level crossings.

In her last Railway Budget, our hon. Railway Minister announced that all the unmanned level crossings would be manned, which must be expedited.

As per the official version the number of unmanned level crossings in the Southern Railway is 123 and which 45 railway tracks in Alappuzha district in my Constituency. Major area of the costal railway in Kerala is going through Alappuzha district and many accidents have occurred in this district in the last many years. In May, 1996 alone, 38 persons were killed at Cheppad in Alappuzha district in an accident at an unmanned level crossing. Other than this, so many small and big accidents have occurred in the same district from time to time.

Therefore, I would urge upon the hon. Minister to give top priority in taking steps to appoint gate keepers at all these railway gates immediately and to ensure proper security.

I would also like to mention negative aspects of these accidents. The Railways Authorities do not provide any compensations to the victims in such cases. It should be corrected and the Railway Authorities should give sufficient compensation to all the victims of such accidents including this case.

I would request to the Government that take necessary actions to provide immediate financial assistance and compensation to the relatives of deceased and take urgent actions to depart the mortal of deceased foreigners to their mother country. I would once again request the Government to ensure appointment and posting of sufficient number of gate keepers at all level crossings.

SHRI M.B. RAJESH (PALAKKAD): Madam, I also want to associate myself with this issue.

MADAM SPEAKER: You name will be associated. Please send your name at the Table.